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THE APPALACHIAN MOUNTAIN CLUB

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The founding of the Appalachian Mountain Club at Boston in January, 1876, may be regarded as the first successful beginning in America of an associated movement towards the promotion of a fondness for nature on the larger scale, and particularly as expressed in the mountain as a field for sport and means of spiritual uplift. Other societies have indeed preceded it: the little Alpine Club, at Williamstown, Mass., in 1863, composed of a coterie of the college community of that place, who, invited primarily by the neighboring Mount Greylock, passed on to pioneer investigations in the mountains of New Hampshire; the similar group of friends in Portland, Me., who, lured by the peaks lying blue on their northwestern horizon, associated themselves in 1873 under the name of the White Mountain Club; and a third, short-lived society, in a region of greater natural possibilities—the Rocky Mountain Club (1875) of Denver, Col. The first two, by reason of their limited and purely social nature, and the western club, by reason, doubtless, of the more pioneer type of civilization which accords less room and leisure for recreation, were fated to a brief existence and passed with the dissociation of the groups creating them.

Every circumstance of time, place and character of the initiators of the movement conspired to favor the establishment of a strong, useful and permanent organization when the Appalachian Mountain Club was founded. The troubles of the Civil War were over and the country was in a current of commercial prosperity, typified in the Centennial Exposition, even then being installed at Philadelphia. The nation was emerging from a narrow provincialism, and wider, more cosmopolitan views were being fostered by an increasing foreign travel—always a stimulus to an enlarged appreciation of natural scenery. Knowledge of the existence and work of the “Alpine Club” *par excellence*, founded in London in 1857, and of the continental alpine and tourist clubs based more or less upon its model,

was becoming familiar on this side of the ocean. Nowhere, perhaps, more than in Boston were the conditions favorable for the starting of a similar movement, by reason of its older and at that time more homogeneous civilization, its less strenuous and absorbing commercial spirit, and the presence here of a coterie of the pupils of the great naturalist and early student of glaciers, Louis Agassiz, several of whom were active participants in the organization of the Appalachian Mountain Club.

The call to those interested was issued by Edward C. Pickering, then professor of physics in the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, but shortly after appointed director of the Harvard College Observatory. Other members of the faculty of the Institute—T. Sterry Hunt, Niles, Cross, Lanza and the younger Henck—were likewise present at that initial meeting. Most active of all in the work of organization was Samuel H. Scudder, then a leader in American entomology. Edward S. Morse, of Salem, and Charles H. Hitchcock, of Dartmouth College, then state geologist of New Hampshire, were also present and later rendered service on the early boards of officers. The club organized with Pickering for president, Scudder for vice-president, and Henck as secretary. Hunt, Hitchcock, Count Pourtalès, Nowell and Fay were the other members of its first council.

The dominant character of the scientific element stands out in this roll-call. Indeed there had been a strong expression of the feeling that the times were ripe for the formation of a New England geographical society, and a plea was made that this be the outcome of the meeting. Wiser councils prevailed, for we should then have had simply one more learned society, leading a cold and possibly precarious existence, instead of a vigorous, full-blooded, ardent club, whose growth has never been retarded, whose mission has constantly broadened, and which has served as the prototype to other similar societies in distant parts of the United States. Though the club has always been democratic in the fullest sense of the term, it should not perhaps be lost sight of that the social standing of a considerable fraction of both sexes of those interested in its foundation was a factor in its immediate success, most effectively calling attention to the high character of this movement for an entirely novel association.

As stated in its by-laws, the objects of the club at its inception were "to explore the mountains of New England and the adjacent

regions, both for scientific and artistic purposes, and in general to cultivate an interest in geographical studies." In this last phrase we may see a concession to the party referred to above. A complete statement is set forth in the paragraph introductory to the first issue of its periodical, "Appalachia," which appeared under the editorship of Mr. Scudder in June, 1876, the club being then but six months old. Somewhat more condensed it appears in the preface of the first annual Register (that for 1880), where we read:

"It aims to serve a threefold purpose. First, to combine the energies of all who are interested to render our mountain resorts more attractive by building paths, camps and other conveniences, by constructing and publishing accurate maps, and by collecting all available information concerning the mountain region. Second, to collect and make available the results of scattered scientific observations of all kinds, which, though of little value each by itself, yet when brought together may be of great use. Third, in the accomplishment of these ends to be a source of pleasure and profit to its members, by affording a ground on which they may meet to compare notes and to interchange ideas on subjects in which all are interested. As means to these ends the club holds monthly meetings in Boston during the winter, occasional field meetings during the summer, and an annual art exhibition; and, incidentally, organizes excursions to accessible points of interest."

A perfect form of organization was adopted for the furtherance of these clearly outlined ends. Besides the usual executive officers, provision was made for five councillors, representing severally natural history, topography, art, exploration, and improvements, who, jointly with the other officers, founded the council, the administrative body of the society. With a special officer to foster and guard its interests, no department of the club has declined in vigor in the third of a century since its organization, excepting as very strenuous effort has diminished the field for present and future activity, as notably in exploration. It seems to-day hardly credible that in 1876 the heart of the White Mountains was known only to a few timber surveyors, where now frequent companies of joyous campers pass and repass every summer; so completely has the work of this department been done.

All that the club promised at its inception it has fulfilled: the paths and camps are there and known to hundreds of both sexes; the maps exist to-day, either issued by the club itself, or rendered accessible and popularized from the results of Government surveys:

the monthly meetings have become more nearly fortnightly, and each summer has had at least one field-meeting; moreover, the club has its beautiful and convenient rooms in the Tremont Building, which house not only its valuable special library of alpinistic and geographical literature, but also its fine collections of photographs of mountain scenery from many quarters of the globe. These rooms serve as a place of meeting for individual members or groups, and even for minor assemblies. The larger regular meetings are held, as from the beginning, at the Institute of Technology,—no longer in some available classroom, but most frequently in its ample Huntington Hall. The club's publication, "Appalachia," has reached its twelfth volume, each containing four numbers and averaging over 400 pages, all teeming with articles setting forth the interesting climbs and explorations of members, not only in New England but in "the adjacent regions," which phrase is interpreted to cover all parts of our continent and even some foreign lands. "Appalachia" also presents a complete history of the club. Its volumes contain many fine illustrative plates in photogravure and "half-tone." Houghton & Mifflin (Riverside Press) are its publishers.

Most germane, however, to this article, is the purpose the club has served in increasing the health and joy in life of those who have come under its influence. This influence has been constant and ever widening. Starting with thirty-four members, its membership had reached 220 at the end of the second year, at the end of its first decade 690, of the second decade 950, and at the opening of 1910 its membership has attained to 1,630. Its financial resources have kept pace with its growth in numbers, and from the meagre income of its early years (\$500 for the year 1878) they rose to \$3,000 in 1888, \$5,500 in 1898, and \$7,000 for the year 1909. Although the club has never aimed to acquire a capital, nor stinted to this end the support of its various interests, its present invested funds amount to about \$15,000. Still other assets are its reservations of real estate. These comprise some twelve parcels of mountain and forest lands in Maine, New Hampshire, and Massachusetts, donations from public-spirited citizens, and held in trust for the public as wild parks; also, as a private reserve, the club camp on Three Mile Island in Lake Winnepesaukee, some forty acres, with club-house, boat-houses, tents, observatory, and other convenient buildings and equipment.

The Three Mile Island camp represents a very active agency of the club in furnishing throughout the summer a ready opportunity for members and their friends to lead the simple life in close touch with Nature. Though near to popular resorts, the camp itself is isolated, and to all intents and purposes might be in the heart of the wilderness. The island is covered with a young forest-growth, which is carefully fostered. The campers live in tents scattered along the shore and connected with each other and the main clubhouse by simple foot-paths. Meals are served on the verandas of the main building, which also contains a large room with a rustic stone fire-place as a place of assembly and social intercourse. Steam launches supplement the numerous row-boats owned by the club or by members. Sails upon the lake, swimming, and trips to the shore for walks or to ascend the near-lying mountains furnish the principal types of recreation. Nearly two hundred persons availed themselves of this camp in 1908, about the usual number. On the Rhododendron Reservation, in Fitzwilliam, N. H., a farm of three hundred acres, from which it has its name, the gift of Miss Mary L. Ware, there is also a comfortable farm house, which has been reconstructed with a special view to receiving small parties of guests. This house is rented to members for short periods during the summer season, and occasionally in winter, to private parties of members and friends desiring such an outing. The reservation includes a swampy tract of some twelve acres, the habitat of one of the finest growths in all New England of this beautifully flowering shrub.

Most widely known, however, of the club's contributions to the sum of human enjoyment is the Madison Spring Hut, a stone refuge in the *col* (depression) between Mts. Madison and Adams, the two most northerly peaks of the Presidential range of the White Mountains. It was built in 1888 and nearly doubled in capacity in 1906, when it was determined to place a custodian in charge and conduct the establishment more completely under club supervision. The original purpose in building the hut was to furnish a place of refuge for those overtaken by storm or darkness, and a comfortable residence for the few who might be tempted to pass a few days at this airy height—4,820 feet above the sea and at the upper verge of the low scrub growth of fir and spruce. The reports of the few, however, proved so stimulating to the ambition and curiosity of the many, that the resort to the place rapidly increased, to such an

extent as to raise questions of right and precedence, and otherwise to create difficulties which it became impossible for the absent administration to control. A permanent representative was therefore installed in 1908, after the club had expended a considerable sum in enlarging the house and providing a separate apartment for ladies. The club supplies fuel and utensils for cooking, but not food; also blankets, to defend against the low temperatures at night. The hut is conveniently approached from the highway at Randolph, N. H., the hotels of which shelter doubtless the most enthusiastic clientele of climbers to be found in any eastern mountain resort. An elaborate system of paths, constructed and maintained by the club—or by the personal initiative and at the expense of Mr. J. Rayner Edmonds of Cambridge, an original member and officer, later president of the society—has this refuge as one of its objectives, and few of the club paths, of which some 130 miles are under official supervision, are more frequented than those of the northern peaks. They are directly connected with those leading across the summits or skirting the several cones of the Great Range, of which the summit of Mount Washington is the midway point. In traversing this “high line” one enjoys what is doubtless the finest mountain excursion afforded by the mountains of eastern America. Hundreds make it now every year. Probably the number who had made it antecedent to the founding of the Appalachian Club would hardly have exceeded the number of those who may form a single club-party of the present day. For such as desire to cover the trip in easy stages it is possible to take advantage of certain of the club’s log camps, by descending into some of the side ravines. On the other hand those limited in time, but not in strength, may go from the Madison Spring Hut over the range to the Crawford House in the Notch in a single day.

Besides these paths to and along the summits of mountains the club has opened shorter trails to interesting objects in different parts of the White Mountains, such as the Ice Gulch in Randolph, the “Lost River” in North Woodstock, where the stream winds an almost subterranean way among vast boulders, or to that giant erratic, the Madison Boulder, perhaps the largest in the United States, in the town of the same name. And all these facilities, save only Three Mile Island, the club offers as freely to the public as to its own members. Consequently it is not strange that it is regarded

as a society of public utility, and that it is granted special consideration as regards taxation by the legislatures of New Hampshire and Massachusetts, and certain privileges by the large owners of forest tracts, whose good will is of no small importance.

It may have been noticed that, in setting forth the objects of the club, the organizing of excursions to accessible points of interest was spoken of as "incidental." So it was and such it has remained; but the incidental bulks large among the popular and truly useful activities of the club. Indeed, one of the hardest worked committees is that on excursions and field meetings. They have in charge not only the arranging annually of a series of excursions with large parties, but the details of these and their personal conducting by one or more representatives of the committee. Such excursions are principally to mountain resorts of New England; yet the Adirondacks, the Catskills, the Appalachians of North Carolina, and even the distant Selkirk and Cascade ranges of the Far West have been the goal of enthusiastic club parties. Since 1886 a new feature has provided the enjoyment of visits by frequent smaller parties to the nearer points of interest, combined with the healthful exercise of walking. These are the weekly "outings" to the hills, parks, groves or seashore in the vicinity of Boston, or within easy access by rail, led by some volunteer member of the club. Foul indeed must be the weather to occasion a postponement. The outings are becoming more popular than the excursions, if we may judge from the statistics of 1908, when the total number on six excursions was 290, an average of 48, and on forty-three outings it reached 2,293, an average of 53.

In this connection mention should be made also of the "Snowshoe Section," an organization within the club and under its control, yet having its own officers and being in most respects independent. It was organized as early as 1886. Its object is to encourage snowshoeing, not only as an exercise, but more especially as a help in mountaineering. All club excursions of more than two days' duration in the months of January and February are in charge of the snowshoe committee. It numbers some 280 members, about one-sixth of the entire membership of the parent club.

It would perhaps be claiming too much to say that to the Appalachian Mountain Club is due the extension of its idea and methods to the other parts of the country, yet doubtless its singular

success has been an inspiration to those who led in the founding of the Sierra Club in California and the Mazamas in Oregon, the leading out-of-door societies of the Pacific Coast. With grander mountains readily accessible, the alpinistic feature is more in evidence in those than in the eastern society, which must content itself for the most part with lower altitudes and less exciting ascents, and make more of the exquisite sylvan features of our own forests and lakes.

If the writer of this paper, who has followed the fortunes of the club from its inception to the present day, were called upon to tell wherein the organization has been of chief advantage in the larger social life of the time, he would refer to the conspicuous part it bore in the work of creating the Metropolitan Park system of Boston, the conception of its then councillor of topography, Mr. Charles Eliot, but he would lay even greater stress on its effect in awakening a dormant love of out-of-doors with its clarifying and uplifting ethical influence and in providing the way in which hundreds, and even thousands, who otherwise never might have found them, may enjoy the delights of the deep woods and the cloud-swept mountain top.

The story of the Appalachian Mountain Club and of its successful work deserves to be read and pondered in every city of our land, particularly in those favored by proximity to mountains or to other grand or beautiful natural features. Similar societies might to great public advantage be formed in many places, which later might become affiliated with the Appalachian Club in a way similar to that in which the numerous local "sections" of the great German and Austrian Alpine Club contribute to swell its influential total to well nigh 100,000 members.